

POLITICAL HISTORY OF NUPE KINGDOM

85

wanderings from west to east and south-east, was the carrier of conquest. It was separated from the groups which it subjugated by ethnic descent and social structure, consisting apparently of a loose aggregate of kinship groups and self-constituted warlike bands, and only partly by its system of livelihood; for the predecessors of the Fulani, the Nupe rulers, had already been soldiers and had themselves evolved an urbanized civilization in which Mohammedan culture played its part. But the analysis of Fulani political history goes beyond the scope of this book.

We can study some of the stimuli which, though perhaps it did not initiate, yet certainly influenced and directed the political growth of Nupe. Limiting ourselves to the periods that come under the heading of 'real' history, we can point out the essential difference in the policy of expansion before and after the Fulani conquest. The expansion of the pre-Fulani kingdom appears to have been most marked in the north, and of the Fulani era, in the south. Tsoede's grave, symbolic to all Nupe kings of what we might call his 'political testament', lies in Gbagede, 100 miles north of their northernmost capital, Rabá. The Fulani Emirs, on the other hand, drove their armies farther and farther south only in recent times, less than two generations ago, did they begin to consolidate the Gbári provinces, thirty or forty miles north of Bida. The conquest of the northern territories, inhabited by primitive pagans who possessed no handicrafts or remarkable wealth, had evidently two main aims (apart from the necessity of pacifying the border countries): first, to tap the rich, easily accessible reservoir of slaves which the Nupe found among these primitive and poorly protected groups; and second, to protect and attract the trade from the wealthy centres of civilization in the Hausa states. Of this latter aim we have concrete proof. The main trade-routes from Hausa passed through, and partly ended in, Nupe, crossing on their way the territories of unruly hostile tribes. Rabá was the goal of the huge caravans that carried regularly *kamoa* (potash) from Lake Chad over Kano to the countries of the south.¹ When the first European explorers, in the times of the last indigenous Nupe kings, reached Nupe country and Rabá, they found it a town rich in cattle (the humped, northern, breed), horses, camels, and ostriches—which must all have come from the north—and the markets full of precious goods from Hausa, Bornu, and North Africa.²

The turning to the south represents a new political interest, bound up with a later phase in the history of West Africa. Fulani-Nupe, as the southern outpost of the Fulani Empire, carried its wars of expansion into the pagan south and no longer into the northern countries which had come under the sovereignty of various Fulani potentates to whom Nupe was tied by common allegiance. The south offered, over and above new densely populated areas for slave raiding, the command of the main route for the slave-trade, down the river to the coast whence ships took the slaves to foreign ports. Not until the Fulani subjugated the Kakanda

¹ See Barth, *op. cit.* ii, p. 115.

² See J. and R. Lander: Rabá had large herds of 'horned cattle remarkable for size and beauty' and a 'prodigious number of excellent horses' (*op. cit.* ii, pp. 312-13).

POLITICAL HISTORY OF NUPE KINGDOM

90 The struggle for dynastic power is apparent in the economic field.
 643 The control over the wealth and the potential resources of the country,
 652 though not exclusively the king's, is yet sufficiently his to render his
 661 economic position unassailable. The king of Nupe derived his income
 firstly from the taxes and tributes which his officers collected, and of
 which he received the largest share, and secondly, from the wars and
 raids which the king's armies carried into foreign lands. The king's
 private estates constituted a third important source of income. These
 estates were worked by slaves who lived in small hamlets on the royal
 lands called *esozi*. We shall discuss the organization—past and present—
 of these royal estates later, in the chapter on land tenure. Here we need
 only say that not all the Emirs of Nupe were equally keen farmers; some,
Etsu Mohamadu for example, let things drift; they took little interest
 in their estates, neglected their *esozi*, and cared only about the regular
 payments of their share in the yield of the farms.

Other sources of income are less clearly defined—profits made from
 commerce (above all, from slave-trade), in which an *Etsu* Nupe, like
 every Nupe nobleman, might sometimes engage; or proceeds from
 bribes, extortion, and the confiscation of estates belonging to rebels and
 other 'enemies of the country'. One interesting variety of this latter
 kind is the exploitation of a religious institution, a 'king's cult' of com-
 paratively recent origin, the anti-witchcraft society which is known in
 [575] Nupe as the *ndakó gboyú*. The Fulani Emirs had ingeniously grasped
 the control over this powerful and lucrative secret society and shared the
 proceeds with its members; the share of *Etsu* Bello in one year is said to
 have amounted to over £100.¹

Another source of income, which will gain the economist's special
 643 appreciation, lay in the royal monopoly of the kola-nut trade. You will
 652 find to-day two kinds of kola-nuts on the markets of Nupe (or for that
 655 matter Nigeria): the small cheap kind, which is imported from the Gold
 Coast and Southern Nigeria, and the large, most expensive kola-nut
 439 which is grown in Nupe country, on the farms of the kola-nut planters
 661 of Labozi. Till the days of British rule this latter kind, famous all over
 Nigeria, could be procured only by the members of the nobility; no
 commoner or peasant had any opportunity of obtaining Labozi nuts.
 The trade in these nuts was a strict monopoly of the *Etsu* Nupe, the
 kola-nut growers being forbidden to sell their crop to anyone except his
 own agents.² Stories are current of traders smuggling the precious fruits
 out of Labozi by night, lest they should be seen and caught by the men
 of the king. In the kola-nut monopoly an instrument of sharp class-
 prerogative was cleverly combined with an efficient economic measure.³
 But to what extent the *Etsu* Nupe disposed of the kola-nuts as gifts to
 his courtiers and favourites, and to what extent he made money by sell-
 ing them to the nobility of the country, I am unable to say.

¹ See p. 142 and *Africa*, 4, 1935.

[782] ² The *Etsu* Nupe in turn supplied the kola-nut planters with slaves to help
 567] them in their work. In pre-Fulani days the kings of Nupe are reported also to
 have presented one slave every year to Labozi to be sacrificed in the annual ritual
 with which the Labozi planters secured the thriving of their crop.

³ See p. 129.

POLITICAL HISTORY OF NUPE KINGDOM

119

Beni and re-established the integrity of the Beni confederacy in the form of a royal domain. *Etsu* Maliki, levying tax upon tax on a country depleted by civil war, and having to defend a weakened kingdom both against powerful feudal lords and a restive population, invented a new system of government: he now applied the *ajele* system which was formerly restricted to the Outside Peoples to the kingdom itself. He divided the country into six large districts placed in charge of his delegates—trusted slaves, who, accompanying the fief-holders on their tax-collecting expeditions from fief to fief, collected the royal tax at the head of an armed force strong enough to cow into submission rebellious subjects as well as any too independent feudal lords.¹ When *Etsu* Abubakari came to the throne, he found all the wells of supply dried up. The taxing system of his predecessors had left nothing in the country that could be made into money—nothing except human beings. He started raiding his own provinces to find slaves for the market, breaking down the most fundamental distinction of political status, that between the citizens of the kingdom proper and the conquered *zafi kati*. But, my informant added philosophically when he finished his sad story: 'A gown is dirty—you wash it; behold, the water is dirty—with what are you going to wash the water?'

In this ever-changing pattern of feudal administration the capital stands somewhat apart, being administered directly by the king and his officers of state. The threefold territorial and tribal division of the kingdom into an innermost core, a kingdom 'proper', and an outside area reappears on a smaller scale in the division of Bida and its population: here we have *ba nin*, the Inner City, where the Beni of pre-Fulani Bida live; the Greater Bida, and finally the Strangers' Quarter, *Idlemi*. But the order of status and prerogatives is not the same. Greater Bida included all the people who had come to Bida when it became the capital of the kingdom—the members of the ruling class, Fulani and Nupe nobility, with all their followers, hangers-on with traders, Mallams, warriors, drummers. A privileged class here again, this group was free from all taxation, and this privilege also extended to all settlements which they founded, the *tunga* in the country, which were worked by their dependants, slaves, and serfs. The Nupe craft-guilds which had come with the Fulani rulers from the former capital of the kingdom, Rabá, were equally exempted from tax save for an annual 'salute' to the *Etsu*. To the people of *ba nin* the people of Greater Bida, Fulani and Nupe alike, are 'strangers'. But in the kingdom they themselves, *kintsofi*, Owners of the Land, were a group deprived of all privileges. They were taxed exactly as the other peasants in the country; and so also, by gate-tolls and market dues, which were collected by the king's police force, were all Nupe from the country who came to sell their goods in Bida market.

Finally, there are the strangers—'real' strangers—of whom this cosmopolitan capital was (and is) always full: people from Hausa and Bornu, Arabs from the Sudan and Tripoli, Yoruba from the south.

¹ These districts were: Cekpá (the country of Patigi), Gbakokpá (Badeggi and Kacha), Eggá, Beni, Kyedye, and Kusopa.

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563 They come to Bida as traders or itinerant artisans, some for a short
 439 period only, others to stay. The trading caravans from the north stop
 485 outside the town gate in the *zongu*, camp, reserved for them. There are
 three such *zongu* in Bida, each situated on the territory of one of the
 royal houses; the caravans must stop in the camp that belongs to the
 ruling house—another expression of that comprehensive dynastic
 division into three. The traders from the south, individual traders and
 621 the strangers who settle down in Bida for longer periods, perhaps per-
 manently, live in *lalemi* under their own headmen, the *Sarkin Hausawa*
 (or *Madugu*, as he was originally called) and the *Sarkin Yorubawa* (or
Asari), the Chief of the Hausa and the Chief of the Yoruba. These two
 men are the recognized ward-heads of the aliens' quarter, and latterly
 have held an official position on the Bida Town Council. Strangers from
 the rich countries of north and south were always welcome in Nupe.
 651 They were treated with special consideration by the rulers of Bida, they
 paid no regular taxes, only comparatively small market dues, and they
 were looked after by their own headmen, who were appointed to watch
 the interests of their fellow countrymen, as, for instance, in all matters
 concerning financial transactions. This treatment of strangers contrasts
 curiously with the ruthless treatment of the native peasants. It reflects
 the vital part that trade played in this country, in the households of this
 society which depended for its existence on foreign markets where im-
 ported arms, horses, and all the paraphernalia of court life might be
 bought, and where the valuable commodities of the kingdom, embroid-
 ered gowns, beads, brass- and silverware, and slaves might be sold.

621 Cutting across this threefold division of Bida there exists another
 584 division, still more important for the life of the town: the division into
 571 small local units, factions rather than organized town wards, which form
 themselves more or less spontaneously round the houses of the power-
 ful nobility. This is, in fact, how the Bida people refer to the different
 parts of the town; they call them by the title of the most prominent
 member of the nobility who has his house in that locality, *efu Ndeji*, or
efu Dzwodifu, *efu Sokvaya*, and so forth. This link of locality is explained
 partly by the fact that powerful men tended to settle their henchmen,
 slaves, and serfs in their neighbourhood, and partly by the fact that the
 people of the locality were ready to acknowledge as their patron the
 member of the titled nobility, living in their midst, who at the time had
 the greatest influence, the man whose rank and power promised protec-
 tion and support to those who rallied round him. But it is not the strong,
 permanent link of the kind we found in the Nupe village. Nor is there
 real continuity in this voluntary allegiance of a group of commoners to
 a noble patron. As the ranks change hands so the allegiance will change;
 every change on the political horizon may dissolve the local faction and
 reset the face of the town.

621 Just as these rank-holders are themselves dependent upon the favour
 571 of the king and the royal house, and as they group themselves in accor-
 dance with that tripartite dynastic division, so these small local factions
 are subordinated to the threefold arrangement. We remember the three
ekpa, the three 'banks', on which Bida is built: the large number of *efu*,

ECONOMICS: RESOURCES

201

themselves make use of these secondary resources which they find on their land.

We may mention, finally, the various uses to which uncultivated land in the town—streets and open spaces in Bida or the larger villages—is put: women may put up little 'kitchens' by the roadside, where they cook food and sell it to passers-by; traders or craftsmen may build themselves a small hut to be used as workshop or booth; or neighbours may get together and build one of the little mosques on the open space between their houses, which you find scattered all over Bida town. No permission is necessary for these modest buildings. For larger enterprises, a big mosque, or a market, the *Etsu* in Bida or, in the village, the chief, would himself allot the necessary space. This practice includes modern requirements as well: thus *Etsu* Mohamadu, who had shown great sympathy for the work of the C.M.S. Mission, gave them a space for building a school and a compound inside Bida, in his own *ekpa* of the town, free of charge.

LIVE STOCK

Cattle-keeping plays a very secondary part in Nupe economics. This is shown most clearly in the very low *per capita* figures quoted in the statistical table at the end of this section. To-day cattle are owned only by the butchers who buy for the kill from the Bornu and Fulani cattle-traders who, with their huge herds, pass regularly through Nupe and Bida, on their way from the north and the south. I say 'to-day', because formerly many of the members of the Nupe aristocracy and the more wealthy among the Bida people used to own large herds of cattle. Slaves taken from the Bororó-Fulani, the nomadic Fulani herdsmen, looked after the cattle. The cattle were always kept outside the town, frequently a long distance away; for they had to be moved from pasture to pasture according to the season, up north, away from the tsetse-infested area near the rivers, in the rains, and south again in the dry season. This meant, obviously, much trouble and cost, and this is mostly quoted as the reason which made the Nupe eventually abandon cattle-keeping altogether. *U de wahalla*, 'it is a great trouble', was the explanation given to me by the *Alhali* of Bida when I expressed my astonishment that it was so difficult nowadays to find people ready to buy a herd of cattle. I have known two cattle-owners—the last in Nupe; one was an ex-slave who died without heir in 1936 and left a herd of thirty-two head of cattle which at the time was tended for him by Fulani herdsmen who had their camp near Bida. It was at his death that the question arose where to find a buyer for the herd. The other cattle-owner was the late *Etsu* of Agaie, a Fulani by birth, who owned a large herd of very beautiful cattle, of over 200 head, which was tended by Nupe shepherds, the sons of ex-slaves of the *Etsu*.

I may, perhaps, add here an historical note: The cattle of the *Etsu* of Agaie were not, like the cattle to be seen at present in Nupe, of the

¹ Laird and Oldfield refer to the huge herds of cattle which they saw in the capital of Nupe kingdom, Rabá.

ECONOMICS: RESOURCES

203

231

the general trend. The same trend is, finally, evident in the Nupe method of keeping sheep and goats.

Sheep and Goats

Very rarely do the Nupe farmers (or town people for that matter) breed sheep and goats. It is, once more, the principle of 'liquid' resources that counts. A great many farmers buy a sheep or goat when it is young, or when sheep and goats are cheap, and sell it again later on with profit, when they are in need of money. Certain regular fluctuations in the price of goats form the basis for this calculation. During the season of the great Mohammedan feasts, when rams are killed in almost every house, prices go up, to fall again during the rainy season, before the harvest, when there is little money coming in and accordingly little demand for animals.¹ This method of husbandry accounts for the very irregular distribution of sheep and goats at a given time, varying greatly with the individual need for money and the ability or inclination to invest money in animals. The general figures *per capita* of sheep and goats are surprisingly low (see the statistical table). The figure for Bida town is 0.12 and for the districts 0.71 per male adult. These figures reflect the very small money resources the Nupe have for engaging in this sort of seasonal trade. Throughout the year, and especially during the time of the Mohammedan festivals, a large number of sheep and goats have, in fact, to be imported from Hausa. But the figures also show that sheep- and goat-keeping is more frequent in the districts than in Bida. This bears out what I have said above about the influence of varied and expanding economic enterprise upon stock-keeping. Bida, though richer than the districts, is poorer in live stock; the centre of trade and of manifold economic interests keeps its capital more liquid than the country with its limited scope of economic prospects.

233

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It is interesting to note in this connexion that in goat- or sheep-breeding the young animals always belong to the owner of the mother-goat or -sheep; the owner of the female animal may ask the owner of the male animal to let him have the animal for breeding, but this would be done without payment or return of any kind, merely as a personal favour. Female animals are accordingly more expensive than male animals, and the inducement to part with the mother-goat thus often overweighs the interest in the breeding itself.

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Other Domestic Animals

The Nupe keep no pigs and eat no pork—an avoidance which is, as far as I see, due only to Mohammedan influence. The few pigs one sees in the country belong to Yoruba.

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231

¹ Prices for sheep and goats vary from 5s. to 15s., according to the season (see p. 316). The great seasonal changes are also shown in the figures for sheep and goats slaughtered in Bida in the different months of the year: January, 130; February, 130; March, 82; April, 151; May, 129; June, 68; July, 58; August, 114; September, 116; October, 119; November, 120; December, 122. The highest figures refer to January/February and April, the months of the Mohammedan festivals of *Ramadan* and *Muharram*; the lowest figures to June and July, in the middle of the rains, before the first harvest of the season.

[435]

AGRICULTURE: PRODUCTION

215

The proportion of maize and the various other millet and sorghum varieties in the productive scheme of one household is illustrated in the following typical example: on a farm which produced a total millet and sorghum crop of twenty bundles the different varieties were distributed as follows:

Bulrush-millet	. . .	2 bundles
Maize	. . .	2-3 "
Late millet	. . .	8 "
Sorghum	. . .	10 "

Sorghum and late millet are clearly shown to be the main staple crops as compared with bulrush-millet and maize, the importance of which, as we shall see later, lies in their subsidiary, 'stopgap', character.

Some enterprising farmers, and farmers in certain districts of Nupe, have added to this table of crops certain special, commercially valuable, plants or have given over a large portion of their farm-land to the cultivation of plants which normally would play only a secondary, unimportant, part. Thus we find henna (*lahi*) cultivated in many parts; indigo (*eci*) is collected and prepared especially in the districts of Sakpe and Kutigi. Recently farmers in Lemu, north of Bida, have started the cultivation of red pepper (*yahd*) as a main crop, in the place of ground-nuts. The first two kinds of produce have a considerable marketing value in the country, the last kind is meant for European export.

Clearing

The dry season is not completely a season of leisure. Many Nupe farmers will visit their fields more or less regularly even during that time, perhaps once a week, to 'look over the farm' as they say, to see that animals have not done damage to ridges and mounds, or to collect brushwood for fuel, or leaves for which there is always use in the Nupe household.

In the dry season comes also the first agricultural activity of the year, the *moa tsaka*, the clearing and burning of the farms. On farms (fallow or virgin land) which are to be taken under cultivation for the first time, grass and shrubs are cut and afterwards the farms are burned. Old farms also are cleared summarily by burning the dead stalks, leaves, and undergrowth that have been left there from last year. Later the first rains will wash the ashes into the soil, thus completing the process of 'green manure', which the Nupe farmers consciously utilize (see p. 221). The burning of the farms takes place at any time between January and May; new plots, the clearing of which involves the heavier work, being as a rule burned earlier in the season, cultivated plots (on which the stalks and leaves are given ample time to dry and rot) towards the beginning of the rains. The heaviest and lengthiest work is the clearing of virgin land. If carried out early it will curtail seriously the short leisure season of the Nupe farmer, and if left till late will add to the work of an already very busy time of the year. Clearing virgin land is, in fact, considered so heavy and inconvenient work that the farmers, especially those who cannot count on the assistance of a large working group, make all efforts to avoid taking virgin land under cultivation.

241 'making yam mounds'. Many farmers will try to prepare their new yam plots soon after the yam harvest, or at any rate before the beginning of the dry season.¹ They clear new plots, throw up the mounds, and plant the yams at once, thus having everything prepared for next year. In Nupe opinion one obtains bigger yams if one follows this practice, plants yam early, and leaves the seed yam in the ground through the whole dry season.²

The early preparation of ridges or mounds offers, on the other hand, two very concrete advantages: first, it means comparatively easy work, carried out as it is in the soft soil; second, it enables the farmer to start his planting without further delay as soon as the rains break. In the case of yam, particularly, this early planting removes one difficult crop from the already crowded time-table of sowing and planting.

Reaping and Harvesting

Our description of the agricultural activities of the year has taken us to the second phase in the farming cycle: harvesting. A fortnight after the harvest of bulrush-millet, following closely upon the third weeding, the first yam crop is dug up, and shortly afterwards the first ground-nut crop. There are two yam harvests. In July the farmers dig out yam for the first time, cutting one tuber from the plant and leaving the rest in the ground to sprout farther. This young yam is considered a delicacy; unlike the late yam it is eaten 'mashed'. Only a little of it is sold; most of it is consumed by the household. The fresh yam, however, lasts only a short time; the second yam harvest, in October-November, is the main harvest, at which the remaining tubers (three or four in each mound) are dug out.³ Ground-nuts, too, are harvested twice. The first ground-nut crop is dug out between mid-July and the end of August, and used for food only; the second ground-nut crop, dug out between the end of December and the end of January—a much drier crop than the first—is used exclusively for sale to the European trading companies.

[439] There is hardly any pause between the end of the first yam harvest and the fourth and last weeding. After this, however—it is by then the end of August or beginning of September—there is a certain lull in the farming activities, at least if the time-table has been kept fairly strictly. Till the next big item on the list, the second yam harvest, the farmer can enjoy a short respite of three or four weeks, during which he can take his work more leisurely. Even so, he remains fully occupied: he is still going regularly to the farm to clear away leaves and brushwood; those who have planted rice or sweet potatoes as additional crops harvest them now; the women pick the melons which have been interplanted with yam or corn. Certain farmers who were pressed for time earlier in the year have postponed the important third weeding until now. The lull continues to some extent after the second yam harvest. Now is the time

¹ In Bida this operation is often postponed till January or February.

² I cannot say how far this opinion is substantiated by fact. Agricultural officers whom I consulted on this question were unable either to confirm or to refute this native theory.

³ In Leaba, in the extreme north of Nupe, i.e. close to the line which marks the northern boundary of yam cultivation, yam is harvested only once.

AGRICULTURE: PRODUCTION

235

But as even the purest native-made soap can hardly compete with imported soap it is not surprising that soap-making is gradually disappearing, and has disappeared completely in Bida and the more progressive villages, such as Kutigi or Mokwa.

Indigo

Indigo, *eci*, is gained from two different plants, the indigo grass (*tsentse*) and the indigo tree (*eci* or *baba*). The grass grows wild in the thinned-out bush that surrounds most Nupe villages, but is also cultivated in some parts (e.g. Mokwa) and grown as a first crop before millet-sorghum.¹ The dye is gained from the decomposed grass which, after having been cut, is left lying in the open for from two to three months. The powder which is obtained by this method is mixed with ashes and placed in a sieve-like basket. Water is filtered through, and this gives the dye, which is allowed to drip directly into the deep clay-cemented dye-pits (called *marina*, as in Hausa). This technique of dyeing follows the Hausa fashion; and in Nupe as in Hausa the dyers, who also manufacture their own dye, are men.

The indigo tree is found scattered everywhere in the open bush, most densely in Trans-Kaduna. In the district between Kutigi and Sakpe we find even something like indigo-tree plantations which are tended by another group of 'tree-experts'. Here every village possesses large numbers of indigo trees, which are to some extent cultivated, i.e. cut and thinned out when necessary; they are not, however, planted or transplanted, but left to fertilize themselves. Among these indigo planters the making of indigo is men's work. But in the districts where indigo is gained from the scattered, wild-growing tree, the picking and preparing of indigo is done by women. The method of preparing the dye is in both cases the same; the leaves are pounded in a mortar, then left to ferment in water, mixed with ash, and finally rolled into balls. The finished product is used exclusively by the women dyers, that is, in a practice of dyeing in pots, and which appears to represent the original dyeing technique of Southern and Central Nigeria; according to Nupe tradition it was introduced into the country by the Konu weavers and dyers (see p. 188, n. 2).

Nupe country offers only a restricted market for indigo. The indigo manufactured by the wives of the Konu weavers, the total quantity of which is small, is either used by the women themselves or is sold in the markets—in the districts more than in Bida—where modern products have ousted almost completely the native technique of dyeing. The much larger output of indigo dye which is produced by the cultivators of the indigo tree is disposed of with the help of middlemen who trade it to Yoruba, the most favourable market for indigo, or is taken by the producers themselves to the nearest market of that country (Ilorin). This latter method secures the better price but may interfere with the normal agricultural activity. A family of farmers near Kutigi who

¹ This method of indigo cultivation is practised on a large scale by the Gbari.

AGRICULTURE: PRODUCTION

386 owned twenty-five indigo trees had to take their produce to Ilorin
 439 market just at the time of the second yam harvest. However, they pre-
 ferred to sell indigo first and to postpone the digging out of yam for a
 month or two, although this meant losing the always profitable market
 for the first yams of the season. The element of economic calculation, to
 which we have already assigned its place in the planning of Nupe agri-
 culture, reveals its efficacy in this new context as well.

245 Not much need be said about the other fruit-bearing trees. The fruit
 of the mango tree is eaten when and wherever it can be picked or gathered
 up from the ground; it is not traded—like the banana it is 'just fruit'.
 The tender young leaves of the baobab (*muci*) are used as food; they are
 pounded and sold in the markets as a vegetable which is added to soup
 and meat. In order to obtain the tender leaves the owner of the tree lops
 the big branches so as to make them sprout new leaves. The cotton-
 248 wool-like kapok which is contained in the capsules of the silk-cotton
 438 tree (*lembubu*) is traded in one or two markets of the country; it is bought
 by the Bida cushion-makers and also by the canoe-men on the Niger, who
 use its fine fibres to stop leaks in their canoes. The commercial use of
 this tree and its fruits has not yet penetrated into the more remote
 districts: while in Kutigi, on the main road, natives were collecting
 kapok to sell it to the Bida cushion-makers, I found in Sakpe, only ten
 miles away but right in the bush, the cotton-wool left unused, lying on
 the ground to be carried away by the wind. When I asked a number of
 men why they did not collect it and take it to the market—I could call
 upon a boy from Bida whom I had with me to bear out my contention
 that this stuff possessed commercial value—they replied, not wholly
 convinced, that it would be too hard work. Another example of rudi-
 mentary 'economic calculation', with leisure weighed against money-
 profit.

INNOVATIONS IN PRODUCTION

245 From this discussion an interesting question arises: why have the Nupe,
 who have mastered the cultivation of kola-nut and banana, not taken to
 18 the cultivation of other trees as well, but left most of their fruit-bearing
 177 trees to the 'care of God'. If you ask a Nupe farmer he will give you
 one of two answers: either the vague theological excuse that God has
 planted the trees, and that God will look after them; or the more ration-
 alistic but no less acquiescent explanation: 'If I planted a tree I should
 never see its fruit, only my grandchildren would profit by it. Our grand-
 fathers have not planted trees for us, why then should we plant for our
 grandchildren?' The fact, well known to everyone, that the Kusopa
 plant and cultivate trees is yet easily dismissed. This is one of the
 cultural features typical of certain tribal sections which are simply taken
 for granted by the other groups. The myth that explains how it
 came about that just this and no other sub-tribe happened to become
 kola-nut planters, the special magic which the members of that sub-
 tribe are believed to own provide the spiritual background for this
 attitude. This acceptance of an existing productive specialization as if it
 were a final and unalterable fact was effective enough, as we have seen,

326 Mohamadu before him, whose royal residence was not far from the brass-smiths' quarter. Here, as in many other instances, the invaluable royal patronage was extended primarily to the craftsmen living in the part of the town traditionally associated with the dynasty. With the change of the dynasty the royal patronage changed also, and under the late *Etsu* Saidu, of the house of Masaba, the brass-smiths in the Masaba quarter captured the largest and most lucrative trade. A contributory cause lies in the lay-out of modern Bida. The motor-road to the centre of Bida and the big market leads through the street of the brass-smiths in the Masaba quarter, while the other brass-smiths' group is situated in an obscure corner of Bida, away from roads and markets. Now, the brass- and silver-ware manufactured in Bida consists to a large extent of ornaments for men and women and other 'luxury' objects. A large proportion is intended for export, and certain goods are even made specially for tourists and European 'curio'-hunters. In either case the nearness of the big trading centre and the main thoroughfare of the town, with its opportunity for display and for attracting customers, must prove an advantage which is denied to the other, almost inaccessible, group of craftsmen.

The character of this luxury industry also explains its concentration in Bida. Its products find their way to villages and peasant-districts as well. But a constant and large-scale demand exists only in the capital. Moreover, the concentration of this industry is, in sophisticated Nupe, a trade-mark of refinement and value, and a guarantee that its products express the latest fashions.

326 531 The technical equipment of the workshop of the brass-smiths differs in certain important details from that of the blacksmiths. The workshops of the brass-smiths, with their smaller and less smoky furnace, are more often housed in the compound itself, i.e. in the entrance hut. The tools are less heavy and adjusted to the finer technique. European hammers, chisels, and files are used to a much larger extent. The main products of the Nupe brass industry are sword-hilts and daggers,¹ horse-trappings, bowls, jugs, trays, ladles, and receptacles of various kinds, made mostly of beaten brass or copper; bangles and rings, which are cast in open clay moulds of bars of brass or silver or (nowadays) aluminium and then bent and twisted into shape; also hairpins and silver chains. Artistic decoration, especially ornamentation of the surface of these various objects, plays an important part. From old Nupe brass and silver-work preserved in Bida and in European museums we learn the different styles in decoration which have succeeded each other in the course of the last hundred years. The style in fashion to-day is ornamentation in *pointillé* technique.²

The Nupe brass-smiths also practise soldering with tin, and one or

¹ The blades are old, mostly of German or Austrian manufacture, and have been traded for centuries to Nigeria and Nupe, across the desert, from North Africa.

² The oldest style appears to be a fluted design which I have seen on certain brass bowls; a later style which flourished at the end of last century, consisted in embossed ornaments which made special use of the flower motif. The *pointillé* style appears to have come in about 1910.

The Nupe brass-smiths also practise soldering with
tin, and one or INDUSTRIES 271

two have specialized in repairs of watches, sewing-machines, and such-like. They also practise a crude technique of *cire-perdue* casting. This technique is applied in the making of a kind of signet-ring, very popular both among men and women, and, by one expert, in the making of small brass figures of animals, which have become quite famous in Nigeria. These figures are traded by many of the itinerant Hausa traders and are bought by Europeans who take them for products of an interesting indigenous art. I cannot prove with certainty that these little figures—*asāgisi*, as the Nupe call them, 'likenesses of man'—have never had a deeper significance. But I am inclined to think that they have not. They have no place in Nupe culture as it presents itself to us, either as religious symbols or as symbols of wealth (in which form similar figures are used, for example, in Dahomey). I know, moreover, that in the case of the one expert who produces these figures to-day in Bida it was his own enterprising spirit that made him adopt and develop this (for a time at least very profitable) 'tourist industry'. To examine the cultural channels through which the suggestion of this production, the artistic *motif*, has reached Bida, is not part of my present task. I have, however, been able to trace two objects produced by this expert brass-worker to their original source. It is a case of what ethnographers call 'culture borrowing', and is sufficiently interesting to be quoted here. This brass-worker had for some time been producing 'dancing figures', little human figures which, by a clever utilization of stable equilibrium, were made to revolve and 'dance' on a small brass stand without falling off. He got the idea for these figures from a travelling Indian trader, who had shown him pictures of the model and explained the principle to him. He had paid the Indian 2s. for the 'lesson' and then proceeded to manufacture similar figures himself. The same brass-worker also produced the figure of a cobra of typically Indian design, which he had copied from a figure he had seen in the house of a European.

The raw material used by the Bida brass-smiths is all imported. The Nupe, it appears, never mined copper, nor knew how to produce the alloy. In pre-European days, I was informed, brass and copper were brought up the Niger from Onitsha and Lagos. To-day copper is obtained from English pennies, and brass from rifle cartridges which Hausa traders buy up in the garrison towns of Nigeria and then sell to the brass-smiths of Bida and other towns. Silver is gained by smelting down silver coins which the brass-smiths procure from a Kaduna bank.

A few examples may illustrate the relation between cost of material and the profit made on the finished article. Brass ladles, an article for which there is great demand in Hausa country, are sold for 3d. apiece; for one ladle the brass from twelve cartridge-cases is used, costing 1½d.; the brass-smiths can produce two ladles a day, thus making a daily profit of 3d. Silver bangles are sold for 12s. a pair; the cost of the material is 10s., and the working time from two to three days, allowing a daily profit of 9d. to 1s. Aluminium bangles, which are made to cater for the cheaper tastes, are sold in large quantities to traders and middlemen; half a dozen, which can be produced in one day, are sold for 2s.; the material (bought in sheets at the European store) costs 1s. 6d.; and the profit per

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326

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INDUSTRIES

277

minutes to produce a medium-sized bangle; I estimated the total daily output of a single workshop at from fifty to sixty bangles.

The finished articles, the coloured and ornamented bangles and beads, are left to cool in a heap of ashes inside the hut to be collected later in large baskets and to be put aside for the traders who call regularly at the *masagá* quarter. The glass-workers have a small but busy market of their own in the centre of their quarter. To this market the traders in bottle-glass bring their goods, women from neighbouring hamlets and farms the daily supply of firewood, and other women traders grain and various food-stuffs for the households of the glass-workers. The traders in the finished article, however, buy the bangles and beads directly from the producers, i.e. the individual workshop. These traders are both men and women and, among the women, both wives of the glass-workers and women from outside. The *masagá* themselves never trade their glass-ware. Bida glass is bought and sold all over Nigeria—it is to be seen in every larger market of the country, in Lagos in the south, and in Kano in the north. There is a steady demand for it, and the *masagá* work regularly six days a week (resting only on Friday), all through the year, always certain of disposing easily of their output. They have neither time nor inclination for additional agricultural work, not even in the restricted form of farming 'for the mouth' which is common among all other Nupe craftsmen.

The people who work together in the same workshop are, as in the case of blacksmiths and brass-smiths, mostly close relations. But among the glass-workers the group which shares a common workshop also forms a single labour- or *efakó*-unit, working under a common head who organizes the group work, disposes of its output, and, in *efakó* manner, controls the income produced by the group. Even distant relations or strangers who have joined a workshop fall under the *efakó* rules. The labour organization of the *masagá*, then, does not allow for an individual *bucá* income in addition to the group income. Instead we find a new arrangement in the form of small regular 'wages' (at the rate of 2d. a day) which the *efakó* head pays his adult co-workers out of the income produced by the group. He keeps the rest and, with it, defrays the costs of production, i.e. the costs of fuel and raw glass or the occasional purchase of new tools from the blacksmiths, as well as the various family expenses entailed in his position as *efakó* head. This financial arrangement is clearly necessitated by the special conditions of labour: it would indeed be extremely difficult to calculate the share of the individual worker in this strongly co-operative form of production. The intensive co-operation itself is explained by the nature of this 'mass production' and by the demands of efficiency and economy: the use of a common furnace and a common store of fuel and raw material, the specialized tasks of the individual workshops and, in the single workshop, the elaborate division of labour, are all calculated to ensure a high degree of efficiency and economy. We note that the means of production are partly produced by joint labour (e.g. the building of the furnace), and partly purchased by the leader of the labour-unit out of his share in the group income (e.g. the iron tools, the fuel); and we note further that this method of production,

INDUSTRIES

283

There are three groups of bead-makers, *lantana*, as they are called, in Bida, one in each part of the town. Their work consists in 'refining' the crude or plain beads which are brought into the country from the north by Hausa and Arab traders, that is to say, they polish and sometimes bore these beads and grind them to various new shapes. The grinding and polishing is done on large flat sandstones especially brought to Bida from the river Niger. The grindstones and a few small iron tools for boring represent all the utensils used by the beadworkers; they are comparatively cheap—the grindstones are sold for 1s. in Bida—and the full equipment of a worker costs not more than two or three shillings. The beads are finished in different styles according to the nature of the bead and also according to the prevailing fashion and the demands of the market. The following styles of beads are in fashion to-day: long slender round beads, used for the *egbogi*, the chains of beads which the Nupe women wear round the waist; small ball-like round beads, with highly polished surface; and small flat triangular beads, worn as necklaces. The Nupe dislike edged beads and beads with dull surface; beads of this kind are polished and ground down to the desired shape and appearance. The grinding and polishing of the beads is a long and delicate work. The average production per worker is three beads a day. The finished beads are strung on cotton thread and arranged in long chains in which beads of different kinds and styles are often mixed, and are then ready for the market.

The beadworkers have no special workshops, but carry out their craft in the entrance hut of the compound. Four or five men are working in one hut; each man works independently, sitting on the ground behind his grindstone. As in all other crafts, the men who share the workshop are usually close relations who live in the house of which the entrance hut serves as workshop. Occasionally there is a distant relation or a stranger amongst them who lives in another house and comes there only to work. More rarely an individual beadworker who has no relations practising the same profession would work alone in his own house. Traders and buyers, who bring beads to be polished or bored, or who collect the finished article, are constant visitors in the workshops of the *lantana*.

In the economic arrangement which obtains in the Bida beadworking industry the majority of workers are reduced to the position of mere labourers, working to order and paid at a piece-rate. One of the bead-makers in the workshop may act as contractor; he buys the crude beads from the Hausa or Arab trader and has them worked by his fellow workers. He divides the work among them and pays them $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per bead. The finished chain of beads is entrusted to the wife of the contractor; she will sell it in the market or to one of the traders in beads, who will then 're-export' these products of Bida fashion industry to the north. A chain of crude beads bought for 7s. will fetch 10s. as the finished article; 2d. to 3d. go to the woman 'middleman' as commission, and about 1s. 8d. (for a chain, say, of forty beads) goes to pay the wages of the labourers, so the contractor can make a net profit of 1s. 2d. on work that took three to four days to complete; the individual labourers make in the same

time *sd.* Evidently, only a man who possesses some capital can assume the role of contractor, and the ordinary beadworker can hardly hope, with his daily wages of 1½*d.*, ever to attain this position. In a few cases I have found two contractors in the same workshop; but many other workshops numbered no 'capitalist' among their workers. In a situation of this kind two other methods are open to the beadworkers: either they buy the crude beads on credit from the traders and pay them back after they have sold the finished article; or they undertake the 'refining' work on a piece-contract for a trader in beads—the Hausa or Arab trader, or sometimes a 'capitalist' woman of the beadworker's family. In neither case does the work of the beadworkers include *efakó* work, even on the smallest scale. All work is done individually, and even unmarried young men are working on their own, being assigned by the contractor a task suitable to their skill and experience. The beadworkers, finally, do not practise farming in addition to the handicraft.

Formerly it was the family head and, on a larger scale, the guild-master who assumed regularly the role of contractor and financier. As in all other crafts the guild-head made himself responsible for 'maintenance of labour' in the group, which means that he undertook to provide the necessary working capital and credit and to distribute the work effectively among the craftsmen. The guild-head, called *Majī*, Master, also acted as the agent of the king in all matters concerning the trade in beads. When the foreign traders in precious stones arrived in Bida, they would not take their goods at once to the public market, but would show them first to the guild-head of the *lantana*, who would select what he needed, and what he thought suitable for the king and court. He would take the collection of newly arrived beads to the king and advise him on the purchase; then, receiving the order for the 'refining' of the beads, he would distribute the work among the workshops of the *lantana* paying the workers the usual piece-rate and keeping a large commission for himself. The constant demands of the court—the requirements of the fashionable ladies in the harems of Nupe royalty, bride-price and dowry (of which chains of beads form an essential part) which the king pays for innumerable relations and dependants—kept the beadworkers of Bida busy. Orders amounting to £5 and more at a time, which secured the *Majī* a commission of £1, were by no means rare. The profits made in this fashion enabled the guild-head to finance the ordinary work of his group and to offer them credit for the purchase of their 'raw material'. In these times of prosperity the individual worker who desired to act himself as contractor could without difficulty obtain large credits (up to £1 or £2) from the Hausa bead traders. The guild organization and the strong financial position of the guild-head were evidently regarded as sufficient security.

All this is a thing of the past. The court no longer buys beads from the beadworker guild. European beads, cheaper and much more attractive in shape and colouring,¹ have crushed the native industry. With the decline of the financial position of the guild-head, outside credit

¹ Some of the European beads which are sold in the markets of Nigeria are, in fact, specially manufactured as copies of the native style.

ECONOMIC BALANCE: EXCHANGE

319

reckon, we make the somewhat surprising discovery that here the more refined work is not only not more highly paid but partly even worse paid than the cruder industry. Both as regards profits per day and profits per article produced the brass-smiths work on the whole with lower profits than the blacksmiths.¹ Why, then, does the calculation of price and profit allow for an appreciation of the specific artistic qualities of the work of tailors and embroiderers but not in the analogous instance of brass-smith work? But is it an analogous instance? In the case of tailors and embroiderers both the cruder and the more refined technique belong to the same class of production: they are both what we may loosely call luxury industries. In blacksmith and brass-smith work we have fundamentally different industries, one supplying necessities, and the other a typical fashion and luxury industry. The explanation thus seems to be that indispensability may equal aesthetic value; and that where these two diverse types of industry compete side by side the factor of necessity may balance or outweigh the appreciation of artistic qualities.

MARKET AND TRADE

We have had frequent opportunity to speak of the complexity of Nupe economics and of the far-reaching specialization of Nupe production, which must express itself most forcibly in the wide scope of trade and marketing. In a wider sense Nupe country itself is one big market. For Nupe is a country which exports and imports, and represents, besides, an important station on the route of transit-trade across Nigeria. The ancient trade-routes have to some extent been adjusted to-day to the new forms of communication, motor-roads, steamers, and railways. But to a large extent they have remained the same, for now as of old a large proportion of this transit-trade is carried to, and by, the water-way of the river Niger.

The following are the traditional trade-routes through Nupe. They run mostly roughly from north to south. One, coming from Sokoto and Birnin Kebbi, goes through Kontagora and reaches Nupe north of Mokwa; from here it goes either west, crossing the Niger at Jebba (formerly at Buka, five miles up the river) into Yoruba, or east through Labozi, Sakpe, to the Kaduna, which it crosses at Gbara, then south to Muregi and, after crossing the Niger, on to Yoruba and Kabba. A second route from Kontagora reaches Nupe Emirate north of Kutiwengi; passes through Dabbā and Kutigi, and crosses the river Niger at Ogudu, on the way to Ilorin. An alternative to this route branches off at Dabbā, crosses the Kaduna at Wuya, and ends at Bida. A third trade-route passes through Birnin Gwari and Wushihi, and reaches Bida via Gbangba. There are three routes from Bida to the south and south-east: one through Jima and Dokomba, down the Kaduna by canoe to Muregi,

¹ The profits of blacksmiths per object are: 3d., 3½d., 6d.; per day, 6d., 7d., 12. The profits of brass-smiths per object are: 1½d., 2d.; per day, 3d., 6d. Higher profits are only realized in the casting of bangles in precious metal, in the casting of brass figures for tourist trade, and also in the production of ladles in the modern cheap material, aluminium.

487 where the route crosses the Niger and goes on to Ilorin and Yoruba; a second, to Badeggi and Kacha, where it crosses the Niger to Eggā and Yagba country; the third route goes from Bida to Kacha, or Giddi, farther down the river, where the trade-goods are loaded on canoes on their way south to Lokoja, Idah, and Onitsa. In addition to these land routes we have also an 'all-water' route, the north terminus of which used to be at Rabá or Ogudu.¹

439 Let me summarize the main facts concerning the 'international' commerce in Nupe. Nupe country exports a certain proportion of its agricultural produce, especially rice and Laboži kola-nuts, smoked fish, and a large variety of its industrial products. It imports various foodstuffs, especially palm-oil and European salt, cheap southern kola-nuts, potash, and live stock. It re-exports potash and beans from the north to the south, and palm-oil, European salt, and kola-nuts from the south to the north. This commerce follows certain interesting traditional patterns. A simple export trade from Nupe to another country is the exception: of this kind is the trade in smoked fish from the riverain districts of Nupe by rail to Ilorin and Ibadan, or the trade in Nupe glass, beads, brass, and silverware, which goes by canoe to Lokoja. In the majority of cases the import or export trade in a certain commodity is combined with a definite return trade in another commodity. Here we find the following regular 'patterns': donkey caravans from Hausa bring beans to Bida and return with kola-nuts (either the local Laboži nuts or the cheap southern variety). Other donkey caravans go north from Nupe; they are loaded in Kacha with palm-oil and salt, which arrive on the Niger Company steamers from the south, and return from the north with *kanwa* (potash) from Bornu. In Kacha the riverain Kakanda buy Nupe-grown rice, which comes down by canoe from Patigi and the Kaduna, and take it south to Onitsa, whence they return with palm-oil. Hausa traders from Kano bring horses and sheep and goats to Bida, to return to their country with Nupe straw hats. Another exchange pattern between Hausa and Nupe is the trade of potash against Bida embroidered gowns. In this trade the imported goods are invariably first sold for money, with which the goods for the return voyage are then purchased. All the variations that are theoretically possible in this threefold export and transit-trade are found to occur in practice. In other words, the Nupe merchant plays three different roles: he is either the local broker who arranges the sale of goods between importer and exporter; or he acts as wholesale trader and buys himself the imported goods to re-export them (himself supplying the transport) to their eventual destination; or he acts as retail trader and sells the imported goods either directly to the customer (on the Bida markets) or to other retail traders, who will dispose of them on the various village markets of the country.

600 We will begin our study of the marketing system of Nupe with the

¹ To-day the 'all-water' route goes to Jebba, the new railway and steamer station, and even farther north, the water-way north of Jebba having been made navigable for canoes. I have described this river-trade more fully in 'The Kede: A Riverain State in Northern Nigeria' (in *African Political Systems*, Oxford University Press, 1940, p. 165).

ECONOMIC BALANCE: EXCHANGE

442 It is impossible to discuss in detail the business enterprises of the big
452 merchants of Bida. Their business activities hardly differ in essentials
from the business activities of Western civilization. They are the whole-
sale traders who, working with large capital, buy goods from the Euro-
pean stores and supply the small retail trader with commodities which
the latter sells in small quantities in the town market or peddles in
[444] villages and local markets. Some big merchants are contractors who run
lorries for the transport of passengers and goods, others importers of
goods from countries outside Nupe. Their business is to a large extent
based on credit which they receive from the European trading-com-
panies, and there are several Bida merchants who figure on the books of
the trading-companies with debit accounts of £200 or more. I will only
outline the effect which the introduction of commercial credit in the
modern sense has had upon Nupe economy. The concept of credit itself
is not alien to Nupe economy; but this new type of credit, which can be
so readily obtained, opened to the Nupe trader a source, not only of
working capital, but also of liquid capital as such. Native business men
have learned to use this new economic device to the full, and in their
own way—which is not always the orthodox way of credit operations.
This is an actual and, I may add, typical instance: a Bida trader bought
European cloth for £3 in the store, on a three months' credit. He then sold
the cloth at a loss, for £2, to a retail trader who was not unnaturally very
ready to pay in cash for these goods the normal price of which was well
known to him. With the £2 our trader went round to the villages buying
in advance the cotton crop of the year (this happened two months before
the harvest was due). He paid an extremely low price—in certain cases
only the annual tax-money of the farmer—and two months later sold the
crop to the trading-company for an amount which was sufficient to pay
his debt and to make a profit of £1 in addition.¹

439 The increasing volume of European trade in Nigeria as well as in other
177 parts of Africa is due to a large variety of causes. The cheapness and,
generally, better quality of the European goods is often mentioned, and
also the change of taste which is brought about by education and by the
example of European standards of living. Our short survey of the in-
fluence of European trade upon the native economy in Nupe has revealed
another aspect of the problem, the importance of which has hitherto been
hardly realized. Trade in European goods, *qua* trade, is a highly
lucrative enterprise which opens up a chance for business and profits
unrivalled in purely native economy. It is to a considerable extent the
native trader himself who is pushing trade in European goods. He is its
keenest propagandist, for he is the one who benefits first and most.

435 4-gallon tin of paraffin costs 7s. 6d.; one bottle is sold for 6d., giving a profit of
8s. The higher the investment, the higher evidently the profit.

¹ The device as such, to sell goods at a loss for the sake of ready money, and to
make the loss good on a subsequent sale, is not new. Hausa traders, for example,
sometimes sell their (native) goods at a loss in Bida in order to obtain money,
and with this money to buy certain Bida goods which they can sell in Hausa
country at a profit large enough to cover their previous loss.

184 yams, where beans and other crops may also be sown. In Lanwa⁴ yams and guinea-corn are planted on the same plot in alternate years, but where the land is less exhausted yams and cotton may be planted together on the same plot. In Kakanda yams were hardly grown at all when Meek was writing (1917),⁵ and guinea-corn was the staple.

241 Two types of millet—bulrush millet and "late" millet—are widely grown. Besides being staple crops, these are the only grains which may be used for ritual offerings. Cassava, introduced by the Hausa since 1910, is of minor importance and is grown during the dry season following the rice crop on irrigated land. Two varieties of rice are grown and practically all of it goes to the south as a cash crop. Onions are grown after rice in the river marshes.⁷

Within the settlements, house plots, often tended by old men, are cultivated, the main crops being green vegetables, beans, sorrel, red peppers, sweet potatoes, cassava, maize, and hemp. Sugar-cane, rice, and bananas are grown on the strips of marsh running through Bida town.⁸

The Bataci and Kyedye sub-tribes, who are mainly canoe-men and fishermen, have more recently been paying greater attention to agriculture. They grow catch crops of maize, sweet potatoes, cassava, and rice on their small marshland farms. There are generally two harvests each year, crops being planted as the Niger floods recede. Deep-water rice seed was asked for by a large number of Kede District inhabitants for cultivation when fishing was slack. Round Muregi rice has recently been introduced.⁹

251 Some crops (yams, sweet potatoes, etc.) are stored on the farm; others in home-stead granaries (*edo*). Millet and sorghum are stored unthreshed; bulrush millet may have to be dried in an oven before storing. Crops for export are not stored.

242 The Government established 17 mixed farms around Bida Emirate during 1937-40. Each was about 12 acres and was equipped initially with a plough and two bulks, and employed two labourers.¹⁰

245 The soil and climate are not, on the whole, conducive to successful tree cultivation, except in the forest area west of the Kaduna River, where considerable initiative has been shown in tree-planting. The only trees to be cultivated are the citrus and mango (recent introductions) and the banana. With the exception of the oil-palm and kola, the produce of all trees is collected by women. Kola-nuts are collected by men; the produce of the oil-palm is divided between the occupier of the land and the chief of the town. Trees growing on farms are left standing and not cut down.

The banana is cultivated only round Bida, Pategi, and Labozhi. Kola (*ebi*) is grown mainly by the Kusopa of Labozhi and its cultivation is a long and difficult process. The locust-bean grows well in the town and open bush and is one of the most important trees in Nupe. The skins of the bean are used for dye and for ink, the powder in the pods for sweetening, while the seeds are an indispensable ingredient of Nupe cooking. The shea-nut grows wild in thin bush country; it is picked by the women, who also extract the fat (shea-butter). Even remote hamlets have their shea-kilns and the shea-nut is the main cash crop, 75% being sold as dried nuts for export. It is little used locally, except for lamp-oil. The oil-palm grows near watercourses and in the dense forest near Yeti. The extraction of the oil is women's work as is the manufacture of soap from the oil. The oil is most important in Nupe cooking but not in external exchange. Indigo grows wild but is occasionally cultivated in two forms, grass and tree. Men make and use dye from the grass and women that procured from the trees. It is traded to Yoruba.

• Davies, 1930.

• 1917.

• Nadel, 1942, pp. 205-7.

• Ibid.

• Notes on Kede District, 1950.

• Notes on Bida Emirate, 1936.

HUNTING AND FISHING

224 Hunting is a significant if minor activity in some villages where it is practised by the special guild of hunters under their hereditary head *ndace*, "father of the hunters"). Nets, traps, bows-and-arrows, and occasionally flintlocks are used. Among the separated sections of the Nupe in the more sparsely populated areas, e.g., the Ebe and Basa-Nge, hunting plays a much more important part in the local economy. In the country surrounding Bida hunting has disappeared altogether.

226 The smaller rivers and creeks of Nupe country are rich in fish,¹⁸ which are caught by spear, line, and basket; larger fish are also caught by traps and seine nets. The Kyedye use hooks laid in lines of about 100. The Bataci fish mainly in pools to which special rights attach (see below, p. 40). Nupe women trade dried fish to the Igbo (Yoruba) area of Ilorin Emirate. Dried fish are also exported to Ilorin and farther south from Pategi-Lafiagi.

MARKETS AND TRADE¹⁹

443 Bida town has six markets, including one night market, and every other town and village has its regular market. Specialist traders travel long distances to the markets, though women who trade only as a side-line rarely attend markets more than 10 miles from their homes. Villages on the trade routes to places such as Bida or Ilorin become "relay stations" at which local traders sell to wholesalers. The stores of the European and Asiatic traders are centres for the marketing of commercial crops.

441 Specialist traders are usually men and women from Bida town. Those who go outside Nupe country may stay months or years in one place, sometimes forming a Nupe enclave. There is a distinction between traders and brokers (*dilali*); the latter undertake to sell goods on commission and are organized under a guild-head.

435 Market prices are well defined and those of local produce fluctuate by season. But many goods have fixed prices and bargaining is rare except for the expensive, more rarely sold commodities.²⁰ Prices in Bida market are nearly always higher than in the country districts. In the country districts food prices are commonly quoted in cowries, the exchange value of which varies.

439 Railways, river steamers, and road transport have become important for marketing and in the development of production, and Nupe country is an important transit area in the north-south trade across Nigeria. The Kyedye²¹ sub-tribe have a monopoly of the river traffic. Muregi is an important ferry point for Hausa traders. The ferrying rights and duties pass from compound to compound in a cycle which, together with the ferrying fees, is regulated by the Chief of the Kyedye and the village head of Muregi. The Kakanda, who are traders, formerly had the monopoly of the river traffic south of Egan, but now share this with the Kyedye. The Basa-Nge²² also trade by canoe: their exports are handled by Nupe, Kakanda, and Igbara canoe owners, and include palm kernels, palm-oil, and cotton to Lokoja and Itoke, yams, maize, and beans to Onitsha.

439 Exports from Nupe country consist mainly of agricultural produce—rice, sheanuts, good quality kola-nuts, smoked fish—and products of the local industries, cloth, straw hats, mats, etc. Imports include foodstuffs, mainly palm-oil, salt, and cheap kola-nuts, also potash and livestock. Re-exports include potash and beans from the north to the south, and palm-oil, salt, and kola-nuts from the south to the north. The import or export trade in one commodity is generally combined with a return trade in another.

¹⁸ See Harmon-Hodge 1929, p. 181 for a list of Niger fish with their Nupe names.

¹⁹ This section is based mainly on Nadel, 1942, pp. 314-34, and relates to the period before the 1930-45 war.

²⁰ But according to Malam Aliyu Bida, Nupe are excellent bargainers and are known to the Hausa as *Masu Kola Kola*, "the hagglers."

²¹ Notes on Kede District, 1960.

²² Hopkins, 1934.

251 of the compound or under a shady tree in front of the house. The grain is either spread out on the floor and beaten with sticks or pounded in a big wooden mortar. The former method can be used only in houses which possess a hard, clean floor in front of the huts; where there is only sandy ground (as is the case in many smaller villages) the second method has to be adopted. The first method, besides, is only possible when large quantities of grain are threshed. The small quantities normally needed for daily use are done more quickly by pounding. In either case at least three people (women and girls) will be working together. After threshing the grain is winnowed. This is done with the help of two platters of basket-work, by repeatedly pouring the grain slowly from one into the other; the woman who does the winnowing walks up and down in front of the house, letting the breeze remove the chaff. Finally the grain is milled, either on a grinding-stone or, again, in the mortar. The latter is the heavier but quicker work, the former is slower but gives the finer flour. The empty heads of grain left over after threshing are used as fodder for horses; the chaff, collected after winnowing, as fodder for sheep and goats.

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Food Crops and Market Crops

251 The foregoing description of methods of storage and preparation does not embrace all the crops grown in Nupe. Before we can make our list complete we must consider another aspect of the question, namely, whether the produce is used for household consumption or intended for sale. No comprehensive simple distinction is possible: we can only mark extremes—a few crops which are used exclusively for consumption or for marketing, respectively, while the rest, the large majority of crops, may be used for either purpose. The produce used for sale comprises first of all the non-food crops: cotton (for European export), indigo, and henna. Food crops grown almost exclusively for the market are: late ground-nuts and red pepper (for European export), and rice and onions (for internal markets or export to other countries in Nigeria). The crops which are rarely sold and used primarily for household consumption are few: cassava, beans, a few vegetables, and sweet potatoes and maize grown in small quantities on inland farms.

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In the case of crops grown for export the question of storage does not arise, at least not for the producer himself, for this produce is sold almost immediately after harvesting (e.g. late ground-nuts, rice). Instead, we have two new questions to consider. First, that of transport and packing. But this also is mostly a matter for the trader and middleman, not for the producer. The native traders provide the big grass bags in which the rice is packed and transported, the European trading-companies the sacks for cotton; the other produce is transported in the ordinary receptacles of the country, large baskets, gourds, or tin basins of European manufacture.

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251 Second, there is the question of the special preparation, an elementary manufacturing process, which is frequently applied to the agricultural produce intended for local trade before it is put on the market. In the markets of Nupe agricultural produce is sold either as it is (e.g. yam,

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462 The Nupe women have many occupations besides the ordinary household duties. Her obligations as a wife are to prepare the food, and bring firewood and water. They spin, weave, cook little cakes for the market, or practise hair-dressing, a lucrative profession, for a reputed coiffeuse receives 6d. to 1s. a head, according to the elaboration of the dressing, though no client presents herself more than once every moon. There are also women doctors, who attend both male and female patients, and receive the same fees that a man doctor would do. The Nupe women are above all things traders, and will often travel great distances on this behest. On these occasions they are accompanied 462 by their husbands, but the first wife is left at home by right of 439 her position. Usually she prefers so to remain; if she rebels, her husband asks her not to come on account of the loss of dignity, but if she persists he yields. In the early days of her married life, before there are other wives and dependants, she may trade in the neighbourhood three months after her wedding, and when [562] there are two wives the elder will often take it in turns to go out with the younger. At no time may she leave the compound, however, without her husband's permission.

462 The women do a good deal of out-door work. They collect 562 the produce of all trees, except palm-oil and kola trees, the former 439 of which were a reserve of the Emirs, but are now divided between the occupier and the Chief of the town, and the latter are kept by the men. These they may sell for their own benefit, after first deducting in every case what will be required by the household throughout the year. Women also cultivate and sell ground-nuts and all root-crops, such as ochro, which do not require transplanting. Men do all transplanting and, therefore, own such crops as cassava, sweet potatoes, onions, etc., but it is the women who have the right to sell them, and as they usually keep a commission of 25 per cent. it is a valuable right. If, however, a man finds he is being given unusually high prices he rewards his wife with a liberal gift of cloth. It is the man who tends and owns all grain and, therefore, sells it for himself, but he is thought ill of if he does not first consult his wives as to the price he is to accept for it. They sow the corn and help to garner it after it is reaped, and each woman has charge of so many bundles, as to the sale of which she must be consulted. She expects some small present for her trouble.

566 When a household becomes rich, that is to say when their 556 property, if sold, would realise £20 to £40, a number of people 736 of both sexes ask leave to become their dependants. The master of the house will take no children without the consent of their parents, but a poor man will frequently desire his protection for them. They are then treated as children of the house, they are given food and clothes, and when the time for marriage comes the master of the house provides the necessary money.

THE KEDE: A RIVERAIN STATE IN NORTHERN NIGERIA 169

world they have almost monopolized river traffic.¹ Let me say a few words about the river trade which Kede canoes have carried for centuries up and down the River Niger: comparatively few of the trade goods are destined for inland trade; the majority come from and go to places outside Nupe country. The Kede ship south: gowns (of Hausa and Nupe make), horses from Hausa, potash from Lake Chad, Nupe-made mats and straw hats, fish and rice from the Niger; and north: kola-nuts from the markets in Southern Nigeria, European salt, and palm oil.

In this river traffic the Kede canoeeman assumes two different roles: he is either a contractor who hires his canoe and crew (consisting of himself and his family members) out to a trader for a specific journey or he is both trader and contractor in one, carrying his own goods on his own craft. A variety of the first kind of occupation is the extensive ferry service which the Kede have established in certain places: here the Kede canoeemen carry people, goods, and animals across the river for a small payment.²

The work of the Kede canoeemen, though lucrative and admitting of big profits, is strenuous, exacting, and not infrequently dangerous. They must be prepared to go on long expeditions, which still to-day may be expeditions into the unknown.³ These river voyages mean long absence from home, often of many months, not only because of the distance of their destination, but also because of the many stops and long waits which they involve: thus the canoeemen may have to wait in a certain place till the river becomes navigable again; or till they have filled their canoes with

¹ The division between fishermen and canoeemen among the Kede is rarely rigid—members of a fisherman family may take to canoe-work or canoeemen spend their leisure time fishing; we will ignore this division in the following and concern ourselves only with the canoeemen, who are of most interest to us. Originally the Kede also used to build their own canoes. The deforestation of the river banks forced these craftsmen to move south, where to-day they form a small colony of Kede canoe-builders near Onitsha.

² The 'very lucrative' ferry service at certain riverports is mentioned in Laird and Oldfield, *Narrative of an Expedition into the Interior of Africa* (1837), ii, p. 316. The most important ferry service of this kind to-day is at Jebba Island, where the Kede compete with the railway bridge, offering a cheaper service to the people who want to save the bridge toll.

³ The journey from Kede country to Onitsha and back—one of their regular tours—takes two to three months. In 1936 I saw ten Kede canoes being loaded in Jebba with petrol for the French Air Service in Fort Nyameh. The river journey up the Niger was new to the canoeemen, and was expected to take three months.

634 examination of the political organization has revealed one such
565 machinery: the machinery of coercion. We must ask now how
182 far other, non-political, forms of integration lend their support,
or possibly are made to lend it, to political unification. We can
distinguish three types of such supporting integrative agencies: (1)
integration through actual co-operation between the sections of
the population; (2) integration in the spiritual sphere—in other
words, through ideologies teaching or preaching unity; (3) in-
tegration based on both. Instances of the first type are economic
co-operation and community life, of the second, tradition and
mythology, and of the third, religious practice.

VIII. Integrative Mechanisms

634 *Economic Co-operation and Community Life.* The propinquity of
182 the Kede and *kintsozi* settlements, combined with the difference
439 in their productive system, invites a certain measure of co-opera-
tion in the economic field. The Kede buy farm-produce from
their peasant neighbours, who, in turn, use to some extent Kede
transport to dispose of their surplus on the large river markets.
This co-operation is by no means exclusive and does not lead to
complete dependence upon each other. The peasants also sell
some of their farm-produce inland or take their fish directly, on
their own canoes, to riverside markets; similarly the Kede buy a
certain amount of their food on the various outside markets which
they visit on their river voyages.

621 In their community life, the two groups hardly achieve a more
182 intensive, or less casual, co-operation. The difference in occupa-
634 tion and in the main interests of their lives is not balanced by any
other strong ties. The young folk of the Kede and *kintsozi*
frequently join in each other's dances; here and there friendships
are struck between individuals from the two groups. But apart
from these contacts the two sections keep to themselves. The age-
grade associations do not stretch across the tribal boundary and,
above all, there is almost no inter-marriage: the *kintsozi* arrange
their marriages with their tribal relations inland, and the Kede
marry among themselves.¹ In these marriages between Kede
[502 villages distance plays no part, which is rather significant, for the
182 (inland) Nupe generally dislike marriages between distant places.

¹ This is true of all the older Kede settlements; in the more recent settle-
ments (e.g. Katcha) I found a few cases of inter-marriage with the *kintsozi*.

323 Beads are made similarly, small amounts of molten glass being allowed to fall fixed distances to determine size and shape much as round shot used to be made in Europe.

323 This trade is suffering badly now. The products are very cheap, but they are in direct competition with more sophisticated, imported products.

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One type of Bida bead is not cheap. It is very rare and is said to be made from "a sort of stone found a thousand miles away in the desert, only at one place. It is brought here only by women traders who go to Kano and Zinder to buy it from the desert people and very few know how to work on it". Accurate details are very difficult to come by, but this type of bead is very scarce and still greatly prized.

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The brass workers fashion all but their most involved shapes on small anvils, beating rhythmically with a very small hammer. The patterns are made with a punch without any preliminary drawing of the intended pattern. As may be expected, the results vary but many are remarkably symmetrical and precise.

Much of the work is carried out in "silver", correctly coloured but bearing about as much likeness to real metal as does the average silver coinage. The Maria Theresa dollar, one of the traditional sources of silver in the North, has been used as far south as Bida but the supply seems to be running out. In some places, craftsmen may be seen making Maria Theresa dollars...

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Bida metal work is both interesting and disappointing at the same time. The folklore of the Nupe people makes many references to great skill in bronze casting and the Jebba bronzes are there to support the tale (*Nigerian Magazine* No. 43). There appears to be no casting now, though there remains an ability to make thin and very ductile metal sheet in a variety of alloys which can be worked over and over again without harm. Many of these metals have a quite surprising capacity to conduct heat, as anyone casually using a brass ash tray may quickly learn.

There is among the surviving guildsmen of Bida a reservoir of craftsmanship and familiarity with working glass, metals, leather and similar traditional materials. Without outside help, their skills will be lost and their young men will turn to other jobs. Perhaps there can never be an adequate, expanding market for their present products; but with a little help and advice, they could still be of greater value to their town and to Nigeria.

Nigeria: Pottery.

Nicholson.

Bida (Nupe) Pottery. By W. E. Nicholson.

These notes refer to one only of the groups of potters in Bida, Niger Province, and the actual workers observed belong to Augi's house in the Quarter of Natsau.

1. *Workers*.—All the operators are women. The family came originally from Sokoto, but the mother of the present potters is said to have learnt the trade from a Yoruba woman, i.e., the technique may be Yoruba or Nupe in origin. All are Mohammedans, so that the survival of tabas, etc., in the craft is not to be expected, and no trace of them was found.

Two varieties of article are made:—

- (i) Small water jug, chiefly used for ablutionary purposes, called in Nupe *Masuge* (equivalent to the Hausa *Bula* or *Shangili*—MAN, 1929, 34).
- (ii) A larger water-container called in Nupe *Dukū-nyeti* (equivalent to the Hausa *Pukunum*—MAN 1931, 186).

The following notes refer to the former only of these.

II. *Preparation of the Clay*.—Suitable clay is found in the swamps of the Gbako river at Badeggi, about 10 miles east of Bida. Itinerant vendors from this village bring it round for sale, and it costs about 10d. per cwt. During part of the rainy season floods prevent its collection. The clay is pounded to powder in a wooden mortar identical with that used in the preparation of food. It is levigated—

- (i) Usually by the addition of powdered potsherds: this powder is sifted before being added to the clay, through a sieve made of slivers of bamboo.
- (ii) Sometimes native bricks of sun-dried mud are burnt and powdered and used instead of potsherds.

After the addition of the levigating material the clay is wetted until it attains the right consistency.

III. *Building of the Pot*.—(a) Old cloths are spread on the ground and the operator places in front of herself a flat sand-stone slab about 1 inch thick; it is said that these stones are purchased from the Bead-makers and that they come from further south in Yoruba country; they are 'natural', i.e., pieces of stratified rock which splits into suitable thicknesses; the slab is well coated with powdered potsherds to prevent sticking. A ball of clay (a (i)) is placed on the slab, manipulated into a 'pancake' (a (ii)) and beaten out thin with a stone hand-beater; any